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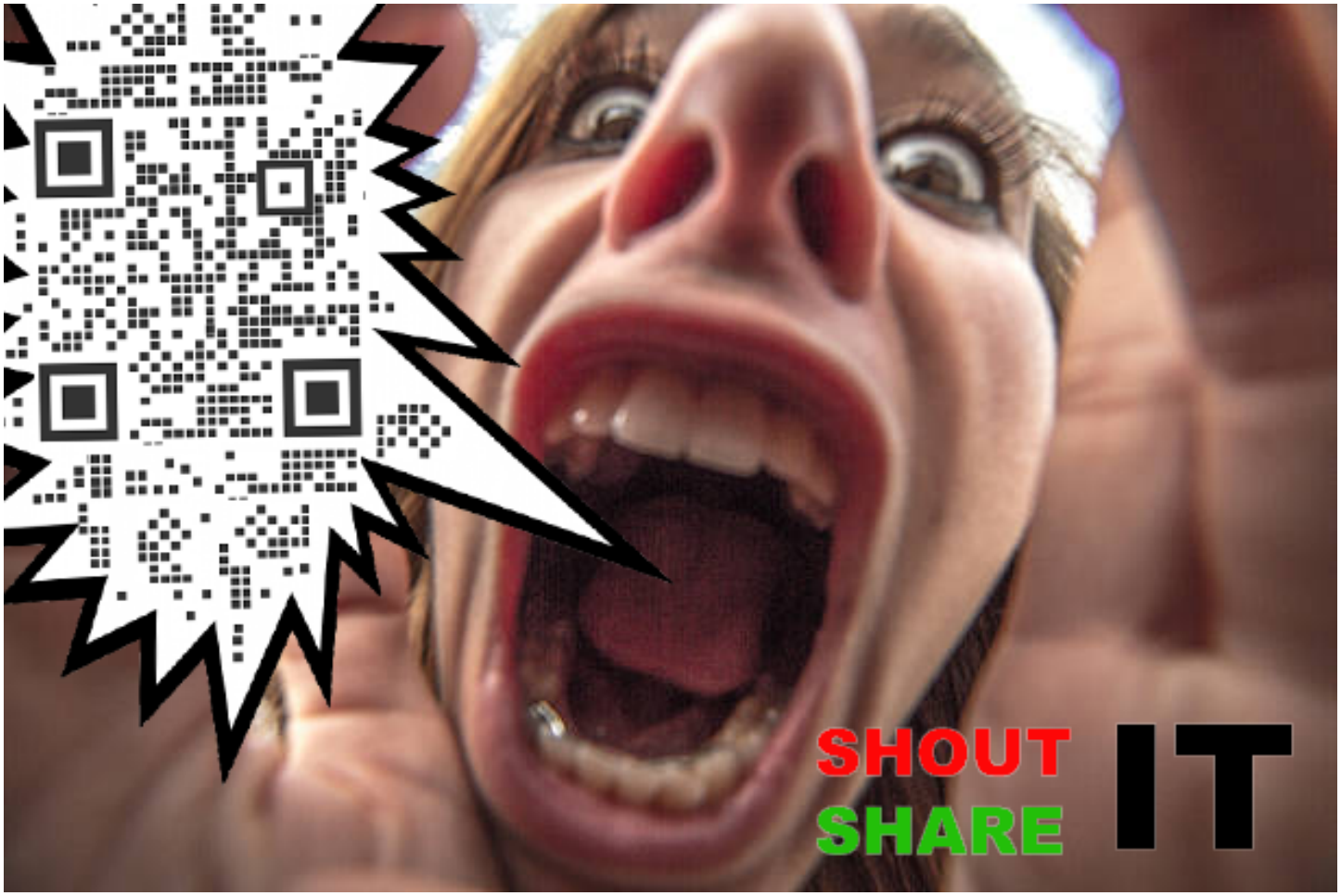
FAO's work on gender in forestry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FAO'S WORK ON GENDER IN FORESTRY

Worldwide, forests cover 31 percent of the global land surface, and more than 25 percent of the world's population, including one billion women, rely on forest resources for their livelihoods. Women play a central role in the forest sector. FAO, building on global data, has found that their forest-related work often surpasses that of men (FAO, 2018). However, women's role is often invisible and unrecognized, and the sector continues to be perceived as a predominantly male domain, especially with regard to the production and marketing of high-value forestry products (Arora-Jonsson *et al.*, 2019; Stloukal *et al.*, 2013). Although the policy environment for addressing gender inequalities in forestry has improved globally over the past decades, women continue to be disadvantaged by limited land tenure rights and control over forest resources, and time constraints. This is due to various interrelated cultural, socio-economic and institutional reasons such as the excessive burden of household chores as well as lack of access to information, capacity development, markets and services, technology and decision-making opportunities.

Achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is central to FAO's mandate of eradicating hunger, malnutrition and rural poverty. The FAO Policy on Gender Equality 2020–2030 lays out the guiding principles for attaining this goal. The policy ensures that gender mainstreaming is a standard practice in all of FAO's work and its regional, subregional and country-level projects. This approach is also guided by international treaties and resolutions recognizing the principle of equality between women and men, and promoting the elimination of gender-based violence and discrimination, such the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1979) and the Beijing Declaration and Platform of Action (1995), among others.

The FAO Forestry Division is strongly committed to ensuring the systematic integration of a gender perspective across its work. The Division promotes and implements gender-responsive initiatives to support women's resilience and participation in forest management, and ensures that comparative sex-disaggregated data are produced and disseminated through knowledge products. At the policy and strategic level, the FAO Forestry Division works closely with governments to support policymakers in their efforts to review and strengthen laws and legal frameworks in the forest sector to be more gender-responsive.

> The FAO Forestry Division has published guidance for gender work in the forestry sector in **How to mainstream gender in forestry: A practical field guide.** This practical guide includes examples of how to incorporate gender issues in forestry projects and programmes, and offers practical steps that forestry technical officers can take to assess gender-related aspects of their work and integrate key gender-responsive actions.

Valuing women's role in forest communities

Empowering women can generate significant development opportunities for them and lead to important spill-over benefits for their households and communities. Women living in forest communities have highly specialized knowledge of forests in terms of species diversity, management and use of resources, restoration practices, as well as product transformation and conservation, which are directly linked to food consumption and health.

Valuing women's knowledge, enhancing their skills, enforcing and formalizing their rights, as well as strengthening their active participation in professional organizations and decision-making have all proven to be effective ways to increase productivity in the sector, improve livelihoods, and protect biodiversity

while ensuring food security and sustainable forest management. The FAO Forestry Division promotes gender-transformative approaches and interventions specifically aimed at changing power dynamics that otherwise tend to hinder development in forest communities. In Colombia, community forest

The Social Forestry Team within the FAO Forestry Division supported the development of a framework to assess the extent and effectiveness of community-based forestry (CBF) globally. Two of the indicators in the global assessment are 'equity' (e.g. equitable sharing of costs and benefits) and 'inclusiveness' (e.g. engaging marginalized individuals and groups, including women and youth, and sharing equitably in decision-making and benefits). The assessment framework was developed in 2015, tested in 20 countries and finalized in 2019. Assessment findings are being used to facilitate with strengthening of CBF in selected countries.

The forest tenure assessment framework has been developed by the Social Forestry Team of the FAO Forestry Division. It aims to operationalize the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure (VGGT) in the forestry sector by assessing participatory forest tenure regimes against the VGGT principles. The framework helps countries evaluate their forest tenure-related policies, laws, institutions and administration to identify strengths and gaps with respect to the good governance principles of the VGGT, identify actions for strengthening governance of tenure, and prioritize areas for improvements. The VGGT have two implementing principles that contribute to gender equality: human dignity (non-discrimination) and justice (gender equity). The VGGT specifically call for gender-sensitive policies and laws as well as gender-sensitive processes and procedures in the recognition, protection and transfer of rights

management activities led by the Government and FAO within the framework of the United Nations Collaborative Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+ Programme[1]) showed that the adoption of a gender-responsive approach provided women and men with a unique opportunity to dialogue. Furthermore, skills and capacities related to gender-responsive approaches were integrated and recognized as a key to achieving sustainable forest management.

Limited tenure rights are one of the major obstacles that women face in forest communities. Inequitable customary systems continue to govern land rights in many countries to the detriment of state laws and can seriously compromise women's ability to access land and productive resources. Strengthening their tenure rights and participation in community forestry is at the core of the NFO's work through the implementation of inclusive and participatory approaches for sustainable forest and land management.

Supporting women's entrepreneurship and participation in forest governance

Conventional practices and institutional arrangements can also hamper women's meaningful participation in forest governance and enterprises, leading to the disregard of their needs and priorities.

Promoting responsible forest governance entails taking women's needs and opinions into account and addressing the gendered division of labour and unequal access to economic assets that affect women's use of and dependence on forests' resources. As natural resource managers, women can positively influence the biological diversity of forests, often to counter its decreases, including of genetic diversity, which is caused in part by male resource managers who favour cash-oriented monocultures (Stloukal *et al.*, 2013). However, weak forest governance institutions are often at the root of illegal logging, a practice with devastating impacts on both forest ecosystems and on people who rely on forest resources.

FAO works to promote women's active participation in forest governance and decision-making by equipping them with the skills needed to run enterprises and by supporting their leadership in community enterprises and producer organizations. This is achieved by providing direct financial support and technical assistance to forest and farm producer organizations (FFPOs) representing rural women's groups. In its first phase of implementation, the FAO Forest and Farm Facility Programme directly supported 10 national and 931 local or provincial FFPOs, of which 21–79 percent were women (depending on country or region).

In Cameroon, the FAO-European Union Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Programme collaborated with Action for Sustainable Development (ASD) to assist micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in producing and trading legal timber by providing dedicated training sessions on legal compliance and formalization. Following the training, three female-owned, small timber operations were able to put their knowledge into practice by registering their businesses with the Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts, and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. The newly formalized operators are now positioned to act as mentors to colleagues who aspire to document timber legality.

[1] The aim of REDD+ is to encourage developing countries to contribute to climate change mitigation efforts by: (i) reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by slowing, halting and reversing forest loss and degradation; and (ii) increasing removal of GHGs from the earth's atmosphere through the conservation, management and expansion of forests.

Increasing gender equality and women's empowerment is one of the Forest and Facility's (FFF)* core cross-cutting themes. In 2021, FFF Madagascar supported six apex forest and farm producer orgnaizations (FFPOs) to enhance business incubation services to their members. The resulting 36 business plans, of which 60 percent of women and 30 percent from youth entrepreneurs, had a strong focus on creating climate resilience enterprises through a diversified portfolio of products. In Zambia, the Choma Tree Nurseries Association currently has 52 members (70 percent women). With a borehole installed in 2002 combined with focused training, there was an expansion of seedlings from less than 1 000 of 2 main species, to a stock of 160 000 ssedlings of 23 species in 2021. Income for members has increased by more than 100 percent. FFF Ecuador showed a strong gender focus when piloting an associative marketing mechanism during the COVID-19 pandemic. Its main objective was to provide liquidity when carrying out commercial transactions between the producers of Unión de Organizaciones Campesinas e Indígenas de Cotacachi (UNORCAC, Union of Farmer and Indigenous Organizations of Cotacachi), i.e. purchasing products directly from producers and then assembling baskets of products for later sale. This particularly benefits women who are disadvantaged in conventional transactions. The mechanism has served 300 women producers and encouraged diversified production on their farms with a sale of 275 baskets between July 2020 and June 2021.

* The FFF is a partnership between FAO, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and AgriCord. FFF provides direct financial support and technical assistance to strengthen FFPOs.

Enhancing women's capacity in climate change mitigation

Climate change, deforestation and land use change may compromise the sustainability of forest ecosystems, as well as the livelihoods and future of forest populations, particularly women, boys and girls. Men and women experience climate change differently since gender inequalities affect the ability of individuals and communities to react and adapt to different shocks. Women still have less economic, political and legal influence, hence are less able to cope with – and are more exposed to – the adverse effects of the changing climate. However, they have often led the way towards more equitable and sustainable solutions to climate change, and have proved to be decisive agents of change in climate planning and action.

FAO adopts gender-responsive approaches to climate action, supporting the full integration of a gender perspective in mitigation strategies and initiatives. In particular, FAO's REDD+ Programme, aimed at reducing emissions from forests and investing in low-carbon sustainable development pathways, is committed to implementing actions that are inclusive, fair and gender-responsive – both in policy and in practice. In the context of REDD+, FAO supports inclusive processes that enable traditionally excluded stakeholders, notably women, to participate in and benefit from the policies and measures that governments design, enact and implement for sustainable development and to combat climate change.

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To increase knowledge on and awareness of women's active roles as change agents, FAO's Forestry and South-South and Triangular Cooperation Divisions are launching the WeCaN initiative – a community of practice based on a knowledge network and aimed at disseminating women's expertise across dryland forests and agro-silvo-pastoral regions. Its innovative approach is based on identifying women champions in order to valorize and upscale their experiences, best practices and lessons learned in terms of women's empowerment and gender-transformative approaches among the South-South cooperation countries. In addition to building synergies based on a knowledge-sharing opportunity, the WeCaN initiative will use the needs, challenges and constraints identified from the field for developing capacity development activities, targeted at reducing gaps, and increase the capacities for assessing women practices and contributions.

In Palau, FAO's Mountain Partnership initiative, in collaboration with the Flexible Multi-Partner Mechanism (FMM) sub-programme, Empowering Women in Small Island Developing States (SIDS), is implementing the Sustainable Tourism Value Chain programme to promote sustainable food and tourism as a pathway for conservation and use of fragile ecosystems while supporting the role of women in the food system. The project supports gender-inclusive participation, women's socio-economic empowerment, biodiversity conservation, and protection of natural and cultural heritage in the archipelago.

The new Global Environment Facility-FAO Sustainable Forest Management Impact Program on Dryland Sustainable Landscapes (DSL-IP) provides support to rural communities and individual farmers/herders, men, women and youth to enable them to make choices on their land use and management systems. This contributes to resolving conflicts, improving their socio-economic well-being, and generating opportunities from land restoration and sustainable use. The Global Coordination Project, hosted by the FAO Forestry Division, supports the implementation of the gender frameworks relating to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) by carrying out gender analyses and building on women's roles as agents of change in LDN.

Women's rights and participation in wildlife management

Sustainable wildlife management (SWM) is the sound management of wildlife species to sustain their populations and habitat over time, taking into account the socio-economic needs of human populations. It also entails maintaining ecosystem services, such as the provision of food and livelihoods for the population.

Women and men have distinct and crucial roles in aspects related to food security and nutrition, as well as in livelihood management within households and along wild meat value chains. Nevertheless, gender issues are often overlooked or little addressed in wildlife conservation, use and management efforts.

The SWM and related factors, such as human-wildlife conflict, illegal wild meat trade and land rights all have important gender dimensions. If not addressed systematically, they can significantly limit the effectiveness of management measures adopted and exacerbate gender inequalities. Taking gender issues

into account is at the core of FAO's work on SWM. This is achieved by addressing needs, priorities, knowledge and capacities of women and men, and ensuring that both are actively involved in decisions over SWM objectives and activities. Such an approach leads to reconciling goals of social cohesion, gender equality and sustainable wildlife management.

The promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment is an integral part of the Community Rights-Based Approach (CRBA) of the Sustainable Wildlife Management (SWM) Programme. The SWM Programme is working to understand the roles of women and men in SWM from the forest to the plate, to assess the potential negative impacts of interventions on women, and to establish specific gender strategies at field sites. The objective is to encourage women and men's active and equal participation in community decision making and to improve women's access to resources and services.

In Papua New Guinea, community representatives, both men and women, actively participated in gender equity and diversity training. They discussed the importance of communication and learned about the wide variety of skills needed to function effectively in a diverse and complex community, group and workplace. Open discussions assisted in building a better understanding on gender and diversity, particularly on how gender fits into the cultural diversity of the country.

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Strengthening gender-responsive forest monitoring systems

Forest monitoring is at the basis of national efforts to improve forest management and forest conservation, and is key to meeting international reporting requirements under the Paris Agreement's Enhanced Transparency Framework.

FAO promotes the adoption of gender-responsive National Forest Monitoring Systems (NFMSs), which enable countries to obtain up-to-date, reliable, transparent and accessible information about the state of their forests while capturing the perspectives and knowledge of both women and men whose livelihoods depend on these forests. There is an emphasis on engaging with the national ministries responsible for gender, civil society and women's organizations, as well as collecting sex-disaggregated data on forest use, and addressing the need for gender balance in recruitment for technical and management positions.

By engaging women in activities such as forest inventories, socio-economic studies and remote sensing, NFMSs are more accurate and comprehensive, reflecting the breadth of forest biodiversity and contributing to local livelihoods, including those of women.

FAO's global project, "Building global capacity to increase transparency in the forest sector" (CBIT-Forest), strengthens capacity on forest-related data collection, analysis and dissemination to meet the Paris Agreement's transparency requirements. Gender equality and gender-inclusive forestry actions are at the core of the project, and key gender indicators defined in the project plan (i.e. number of male and female beneficiaries of capacity-building activities), together with the consistent use of a checklist for gender-responsive workshops, ensure that the project's activities contribute to strengthening gender equality. In the six countries where CBIT-Forest was implemented (Guatemala, Honduras, Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Thailand and the Lao People's Democratic Republic), the project reported strong participation of women in capacity-building activities, including pilot workshops, global webinars, and massive open online courses (MOOC).

In Indonesia, the FAO-European Union Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Programme has supported the Independent Forest Monitoring Fund (IFMF) to strengthen independent forest monitoring by training and mentoring the next generation of independent forest monitors with a view to include and empower women to participate in forest governance processes. Due to women's social networks and roles in forest communities, and their inconspicuous presence in the field while carrying out activities such as collecting wood fuels and non-wood food products, they are well placed to monitor on-the-ground logging operations. Recognizing this, IFMF provided targeted workshops for women and women's community groups. Overall, 108 women were equipped with the necessary skills to prepare monitoring plans, conduct independent forest monitoring activities, and report to the relevant authorities.

1 billion women worldwide rely on forest resources for their livelihoods

175 women-led FFPOs were supported by the Forest and Farm Facility Programme

150 women's networks in 16 countries are connected through the community of practice in dryland forests and agro-silvo-pastoral systems

In Peru, in 2020, **162 women** (34% of participants) benefited from REDD+ capacity-building activities

10 countries integrated gender equality and women's empowerment principles in REDD+ actions

More than **100 women** were equipped to prepare and conduct independent forest monitoring in Indonesia with the support of the FAO-EU FLEGT Programme

32% of women participated in FLEGT training

40% of participants on capacity development and awareness-raising initiatives on open and transparent forest data are women

In 2020, the Mountain Partnership Products Initiatives reached **6 000 women** (out of a total of 10 000 participants)

In Colombia, women's participation in community forestry increased from 15% in 2018 to **40% in 2020**

The FAO-EU FLEGT Programme developed **13 studies** to analyse women's roles in forestry across 6 countries

55% of participants in Forest and Farm Facility training on climate change and restoration practices were female FFPO staff members

For further information consult:

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